

Message Text

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SUBJ: ANOTHER RELATIVELY QUIET WEEK IN THE MALTESE ELECTION
CAMPAIGN

REF: VALLETTA 1014

1. AS THE MALTESE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AT LONG LAST LURCHES
TOWARD ITS INEVITABLE CONCLUSION, IT HAS SETTLED INTO A
PATTERN WHICH THUS FAR HAS BEEN RELATIVELY QUIET WITHOUT
MAJOR SURPRISES, DESPITE THE CONTINUING VERBAL FIREWORKS
FROM THE TWO POLITICAL PARTIES. ISOLATED INCIDENTS OF
STREET VIOLENCE HAVE BEGUN TO CROP UP AGAIN, BUT THESE
HAVE BEEN MUCH LESS SEVERE THAN WAS THE CASE BEFORE
PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF'S WARNING AGAINST VIOLENCE TWO

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WEEKS AGO. THE BULLY BOYS STILL SEEM TO BE ON A FAIRLY

SHORT REIN.

2. THE "ISSUES" BEING DEBATED AT THE ENDLESS POLITICAL MEETINGS HAVE NARROWED RATHER CONSIDERABLY, DESPITE THE DESPERATE EFFORTS OF THE HORDE OF CANDIDATES TO PROMISE THE ELECTORATE THE WORLD, AND THEN SOME, FOR THE FUTURE. JOBS, AND MALTA'S POLITICAL DESTINY AFTER 1979, ARE CLEARLY THE TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS IN THE MINDS OF THE GREAT MAJORITY OF MALTESE VOTERS.

3. THE NATIONALISTS ARE RUNNING HARD ON A "THROW THE RASCALS OUT" PLATFORM, WHILE EMPHASIZING THAT SOME 16,700 MALTESE DO NOT AT PRESENT HAVE PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT, AND THAT THIS WILL BECOME EVEN MORE OF A PROBLEM AS THE BRITISH FORCES BEGIN TO DEPART. THE NATIONALISTS STRONGLY CRITICIZE MINTOFF'S VARIOUS PARA-MILITARY LABOR CORPS ORGANIZATIONS (WHICH ACCOUNT FOR 8,000 OF THE "NON-PERMANENTLY" EMPLOYED), AND PROMISE TO DO BETTER IN ATTRACTING INDUSTRY AND INVESTMENT TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT. THE LABORITES SCOFF THAT SUCH IDEAS WOULD ONLY TURN MALTA BACK TO CONTROL BY "THE FOREIGNERS". AT THE SAME TIME, THE LABOR SPEAKERS CONTINUE TO LASH OUT AGAINST THE NATIONALIST PREPOSALS TO "ABOLISH INCOME TAX" AND TO INSTITUTE A "POUND-FOR-POUND" CAPITAL REPATRIATION SCHEME, ONLY REINFORCING IN THE PROCESS THE BELIEF THAT THE NATIONALISTS MAY WELL BE MAKING INROADS WITH THE VOTERS FROM THESE SCHEMES.

4. IF THE LABORITES SEEM TO BE ON THE DEFENSIVE IN THE ECONOMIC AREA, THEY CERTAINLY HAVE THROWN DOWN THE GANTLET AND LEAPT TO THE ATTACK ON THE QUESTION OF MALTA'S POLITICAL FUTURE. MINTOFF TAKES EVERY OCCASION TO HAMMER HOME HIS MAJOR ARGUMENT: THAT MALTA'S FUTURE LIES WITH HIS FRIENDS OF THE NON-ALIGNED WORLD, AND TO HELL WITH THOSE (AND ESPECIALLY THE NATIONALISTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS) WHO DISAGREE WITH HIS BELIEFS. FLAILING AWAY AGAIN AND AGAIN AT OPPOSITION CLAIMS THAT AN ALLIANCE WITH THE COUNTRIES OF WESTERN EUROPE UNDER A NATO UMBRELLA IS THE ONLY DIRECTION FOR MALTA TO TAKE AFTER THE BRITISH LEAVE, MINTOFF VIGOROUSLY TELLS HIS AUDIENCES THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALGERIA AND LIBYA HAVE THE ONLY ANSWERS THAT THE MALTESE SHOULD LISTEN TO.

5. IN HIS EFFORTS TO IMPRESS THE VOTERS WITH THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE COURSE HE HAS CHARTED FOR MALTA, MINTOFF THIS PAST WEEK STARTED DROPPING HEAVY HINTS THAT (FIRST ONE, AND THEN TWO) ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES HE COULD NOT "YET NAME" HAVE WARMLY EMBRACED THE ALGERIAN/LIBYAN/

MALTESE VERSION OF A ROSY FUTURE. WHETHER HE WILL REVEAL THESE NEW CANDIDATES FOR A MALTESE-SPONSORED "MEDITERRANEAN ENTENTE OF THE EIGHTIES" BEFORE THE ELECTION IS PROBLEMATIC. THE MYSTERY MAY BE MORE EFFECTIVE WITH THE LABOR PARTY FAITHFUL THAN THE DENOUEMENT.

6. IN THE PROCESS, MINTOFF HAS MANAGED TO TAKE SEVERAL FURTHER SWIPES AT ONE OF HIS OLDEST AND BEST-LOVED VILLAINS: THE SIXTH FLEET. FORECFULLY REPEATING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ALWAYS HAS BEEN TO DENY ACCESS TO MALTA BY EITHER AMERICAN OR SOVIET WARSHIPS, MINTOFF REPEATED THIS PAST WEEK THAT THIS WAS WHY HE WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH NATO. MALTA DOES NOT WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN NATO'S QUARRELS WITH THE RUSSIANS, HE SHOUTED, AND SHOULD THE NATIONALISTS TRY TO BRING NATO BACK, THERE WOULD BE "REVOLUTION" HERE. IN PASSING, MINTOFF MANAGED TO PRAISE HIS RESIDENT FRIENDS THE CHINESE (WHOSE PRESENCE HAS FIGURED LITTLE IN THE CAMPAIGN THUS FAR), WHILE DAMNING THE AMERICANS IN THE SAME BREATH. SPEAKING AT A MASS MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 1, MINTOFF SAID: "THE CHINESE HAVE BUILT FACTORIES FOR US, AND THEY ARE BUILDING THE BIGGEST SHIPYARD IN EUROPE. WHAT DID WE GET FROM THE AMERICANS, THE NATIONALISTS' FRIENDS? WE GOT VENEREAL DISEASE IN STRAIT STREET. THAT'S WHAT WE GOT." (COMMENT: STRAIT STREET IS MALTA'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT, WHICH MINTOFF HAS OFTEN CLAIMED WAS THE PRIVATE PROVINCE OF THE SIXTH FLEET UNDER THE PREVIOUS NATIONALIST ADMINISTRATION. THE FACT THAT STRAIT STREET EXISTED LONG BEFORE THE SIXTH FLEET EVER CAME TO THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND HAS CONTINUED TO OPERATE FULL BLAST WITH OTHER CLIENTS EVER SINCE MINTOFF BANNED THE AMERICAN NAVY, DOESN'T IMPRESS HIM AT ALL. END COMMENT).

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7. ON A MORE MUNDANE NOTE, THE OFFICIALLY INDEPENDENT GOM ELECTORAL COMMISSION, WHICH WILL BE IN CHARGE OF THE VOTE CASTING AND COUNTING FROM SEPTEMBER 17 THROUGH 20, HAS NOW DECREED THAT THE POLLS WILL CLOSE AT 3:00 P.M. IN THE AFTERNOON ON SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 18; AND THAT THE COUNTING OF THE BALLOTS WILL BEGIN AT 9:00 P.M. THAT SAME EVENING. THE REDUCED VOTING TIME IS SEEN TO BE IN MINTOFF'S FAVOR, AS THE LABORITES TEND TO VOTE EARLY, AND "BY THE NUMBERS", WHILE NATIONALIST AND INDEPENDENT VOTERS TEND TO BE SLOWER TO REACH THE POLLING BOOTH. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NATIONALISTS ARE RELIEVED THAT THE BALLOTS WILL NOT BE HELD OVERNIGHT BEFORE THE COUNTING BEGINS, AS THEY HAD FEARED THE POSSIBILITY OF VOTE TAMPERING UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.

8. COMMENT: THE CAMPAIGN HAS PROCEEDED ABOUT AS EXPECTED
THUS FAR. MINTOFF KEEPS HINTING AT "BIG SURPRISES" STILL
IN STORE, BUT HE ONLY HAS A WEEK LEFT TO SPRING THEM. ALL
POLITICKING MUST STOP, BY LAW, ON SEPTEMBER 15, WITH THE
FOLLOWING DAY SET ASIDE FOR "SILENT MEDITATION" BEFORE THE
SHOWDOWN AT THE POLLS. THE NATIONALISTS DO NOT APPEAR TO
HAVE ANYTHING FURTHER UP THEIR SLEEVES AND ARE POUNDING
AWAY AT THE PURPORTED LOSS OF FREEDOM AND SECURITY UNDER
MINTOFF OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS. MINTOFF HIMSELF KEEPS
RETURNING AGAIN AND AGAIN TO THE ARGUMENT THAT QADHAFI
HAS ALL THE ANSWERS FOR MALTA'S FUTURE. WHETHER OR NOT
THE ELECTORATE BUYS THIS RATHER QUESTIONABLE PROPOSITION
MAY WELL BE THE KEY TO THE OUTCOME ON SEPTEMBER 17-18.
WIGGINS

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